

Theories by Idrab

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Summary: A follow-up to "Not unusual": A couple of theories as to what could have happened to Billy Hargrove when he disappeared.

Theories

Author's note: A follow-up to "Not unusual", so maybe read that first? Also, I own nothing ST-related.

Billy Hargrove went missing some time during the weekend in the end of November.

Days and weeks passed, and everything went back to normal in the town of Hawkins. Billy was a kid who demanded attention – good or bad – in every room he went into, but it was soon clear that he had had no close friends, and he went missing without really being *missed*.

A month after his disappearance, barely anyone mentioned him other than in passing, and it was almost like he had never been.

It was generally accepted that he simply got sick of it all, and went back to California. Everyone knew he didn't like Hawkins, and he wasted no opportunity to let anyone know what a shithole he thought it was and how he was going to leave as soon as he could.

So he probably just left.

After all, it wasn't as if he was close to anyone in town; not his peers at school and not his family. A troubled young man like Billy wouldn't have thought of the consequences of his actions, and could very well have left without telling anyone. Not caring that he'd be reported missing and that the police would have to get involved.

Billy was never much for authorities. He got in a lot of fights because of it.

So maybe he just got sick of it all. He ditched school in the middle of the school day, after all, and drove off. Maybe he started a fight with someone to get an outlet for his frustration. It wouldn't have been the first time. And maybe, when he got home and his father confronted him about his banged-up face, he simply had enough. Slammed the door to his room and left through the window. Took his car and

drove off.

And maybe it wasn't supposed to be forever. Maybe he just needed to get away for a while, but the further away he drove, and as the night grew darker, the less tense he felt. Maybe it got easier to breathe with every mile he added between himself and Hawkins, Indiana.

So of course he'd have kept driving. He'd have driven until he was out of gas, and then he'd have filled up the tank and kept going. Not caring where he was going, as long as it was towards the east; towards home.

Maybe he slept in his car for the first couple of nights, when he wasn't driving. Maybe he eventually ran out of money, and realized that he couldn't keep going like this. But Billy was always a proud kid, and stubborn, and he wouldn't have turned back. No, it's more likely that he stopped in the first town he could and got some kind of easy job, to get enough money to see him on his way again. And then he'd have kept going until the money ran out again, and he'd have found another job in another town, and worked and slept in his car until he could get on the road again. And rinse, repeat.

Maybe he didn't make it. There's a lot that can go wrong for young man on his own on such a long trip, after all; a lot that can go wrong when you have nothing and no one.

But maybe, eventually, he got back to California. Maybe he got back home.

Of course, with Hawkins, it is also possible that something else entirely happened to Billy Hargrove.

Things has happened in Hawkins that hasn't happened anywhere else. Some things happened that led to other things, which led to other things, which eventually made it possible for beings from another ... *place* ... to get through. The gate was shut down and destroyed, but maybe something got stuck here. Maybe something was already here when the gate closed, and couldn't get back.

Maybe it was a creature, which got left behind. Lost and desperate, as

far as beings from that place can feel those things, and it was alone for a long time in a world it didn't know, and it was *hungry*.

Desperation, or hunger, could have driven it out from the relative safety of the woods. And maybe it found Billy, leaning against his car on the side of an empty road, and saw *food*, saw *prey*. Maybe the creature made a noise of some kind as it prepared to pounce, and Billy turned around and spotted it – but too late. Billy opened his mouth – to scream, to curse, to question *what the hell is that?* – but there was no time to even make a sound.

Billy could have been dead before his – still lit – cigarette hit the ground.

And as for his car? Well, if some people just happened to pass on that road (the same road that goes in and out of Hawkins; travelled by both residents and visitors and people who are just passing through) later, and they found such a beautiful car just sitting there ... keys in the ignition, and no one around to claim it. Well, they just might have decided to take it. After all, it would have been the owner's fault for just leaving it like that, for anyone to take.

Or ...

Or maybe it wasn't a creature. Maybe it was some kind of ... spores, or a shadow, or something less corporeal.

Maybe Billy was just out driving, to clear his head after the fight with his dad. He was uncomfortable, possibly in pain after the fight he'd been in, when he stopped his car at the side of the road in the middle of the night to have a smoke. His hands shook; from anger, or nerves, or simply frustration, and a smoke was just what he needed.

Perhaps the lighter didn't work at first, and that was what made Billy snap. He screamed, threw the lighter into the forest and punched a tree.

The pain in his hand grounded him, and – after a couple of calming breaths – maybe he felt a bit silly as he walked into the forest to retrieve his lighter.

Maybe that's where it found him. Maybe he stepped on something slimy that released spores, or maybe one shadow broke off from the rest of them along the branches and slithered towards him ... and he might have seen something move or felt something off and drawn a breath ... and inhaled it.

Maybe it was fast. Or maybe it took some time. Maybe it was painful; burned him from the inside out and made him fall to his knees on the cold forest floor, one hand on his chest, panicking because he couldn't understand what was happening. Maybe it just froze him, made him unable to move as he felt something foreign take him over.

He could have been standing there for a long time, maybe hours, facing the woods and staring at nothing. Then he would have turned towards the road, gotten back into his car, and started driving. His lighter entirely forgotten.

His hands would no longer have been shaking.

Or ...

Or maybe, despite the fact that the gate was closed, there was a hitch. A hiccup; a rip in the veil between that place and ours. A last-ditch effort to create a lasting bridge between here and there, a failed experiment, a last attempt from a dying world.

Maybe something flickered in the air right in front of the Camaro when Billy was out driving at night. Maybe he couldn't see what it was in the dark, but with reflexes honed from being a driver who *liked to drive fast*, he turned the wheel to avoid it without thinking. The car slid on gravel on the side of the road, hit something at high speed, vaulted sideways, rolled ... and was gone.

The flickering was gone, too.

(Maybe, when Billy's eyes could focus after the crash, he found himself upside down in his car with blood running down – or up – his face. He'd have groaned, fumbled to get down, and out, without passing out. When finally managing to crawl out of his wrecked car without getting too much broken glass in his hands, it would have taken him a while to realize that the world looked *different*. That the

earth under him was too soft; that the slimy feeling of it didn't come from his hands being bloody; that him having trouble breathing wasn't only because of him taking a steering wheel to the chest.

Maybe he heard something in the far distance – a sound not unlike a scream, or a roar, or a howl; but nevertheless something he had never heard before – and that was what made him look up and take in his surroundings. And when he saw the world surrounding him, he would have gasped, and almost choked on toxic air. And he would have been terrified.)

Back on the road in our world, the only thing that spoke of what had happened would have been tire tracks in the gravel, and slowly settling dust.

There have been monsters in Hawkins, for sure, but a fair number of them have been human. There is therefore possible that whatever happened to Billy Hargrove could have been something less ... strange.

Maybe Billy skipped school and drove around all day, knowing full well that someone would call his father about it. Maybe that's why he didn't go home for dinner – knowing that no one was home but him and his father, and wanting to postpone the confrontation for as long as possible. Maybe that's why he stayed out until late – hoping that his father would have gone to bed when he eventually got home.

Maybe Billy parked further down the street, just in case, and was as quiet as possible when he made his way through the dark and quiet house. Holding his breath when he snuck past his father's closed bedroom door, and not releasing his breath until he was in his own room, slowly shutting the door behind him.

He would have jumped in fright when he heard his father's voice right at his ear.

Expecting the blow to his face, he would have stumbled but not fallen, and tried backing away while stuttering excuses. His father would not have listened to any of them, but would have stalked after his son and grabbed him by the jaw. Backed him into the wall, held

him there. Told him that he needed to grow up, become a responsible adult, take responsibility for his actions ...

Maybe Billy had heard it all so many times before that he – eager to get it over with – said the words as his father said them. Maybe that made his father's eyes narrow, and Billy realized his mistake. Maybe he tried to backtrack or apologize when he was hit on the side of his face.

And maybe it would have gone the way it always did – a beating, some yelling, and Billy crawling into bed later and not being able to sleep because of his aching body – if something hadn't gone very wrong this time around. Because this time, maybe Billy lost his balance and hit his head on the side of the bed on his way down. Maybe this time, when his body fell to the floor, he didn't curl up to try to protect himself.

Maybe this time, he couldn't.

Neil Hargrove wouldn't have noticed at first, of course. There would have been some kicks and some yelling, as there always was. But it wouldn't have taken long for him to realize that something was off. That his son wasn't struggling, wasn't pleading, wasn't moving.

Wasn't breathing.

And maybe Neil froze for a moment. Holding his breath and listening for any noise; his son's breathing, voices, sirens in the distance. But he heard nothing but his own frantically beating heart.

After a while, he would have knelt by his son and clinically felt for a pulse that he was certain he wouldn't find. His mind would have already been planning what to do next.

He would have taken the car keys from Billy's pocket, walked out of the room and out of the house to find the Camaro parked further down the road. He drove it closer to the house and backed up to the door. Then he dragged his son – who was just a little too heavy for him to carry – to the car and put him in the backseat, without turning on any lamps. He locked the door to the house, got in the driver's seat and drove off.

(If the neighbors heard the roar of the engine in the middle of the night, they didn't react to it. It wasn't unusual, after all.)

Maybe Neil drove the car to the quarry, put it in neutral and pushed it off the edge; watching as it hit the water below and slowly sank.

Maybe he drove for hours, just to stop at the side of the road and drag his son's body out of the car and into the forest. Maybe he buried him there, in the middle of nowhere, and later drove off. Left the car in some abandoned parking lot, or in a field, or between a couple of trees. Maybe he removed the plates, or maybe he torched the car. Maybe he left it in a shady part of a city, a couple of towns over, and waited until the morning to catch a bus back.

No one would have been home to wonder where Neil had been all night. It was a Saturday, so he didn't have work. If someone had seen him, he had only been out looking for his missing son, after all. His missing problem child of a son.

And maybe nothing happened to Billy Hargrove. Maybe he just got sick of it all, and went back to California. Maybe he made it there, eventually, and found himself a job, a home, a *life*. Surrounding himself with people he actually likes, doing something he enjoys and mellowing out under the warm California sun.

Maybe he is not as close to anger all the time, now, when there is no one to be angry at. Maybe he learns to find joy in the little things. Maybe he smiles more often now, when he is finally *home* and *free*.

Maybe Billy is okay, after all.